

While the United States has spent \$29 billion to help rebuild Iraq, and Congress has approved an additional \$16.5 billion, it is troubling that some of the countries that may benefit the most from a secure and stable Iraq—particularly its neighbors in the region—are not providing the money they pledged to help achieve that goal. It's not as though these nations lack the economic resources to meet their commitments; in fact many of Iraq's neighbors are running record surpluses as a result of the windfall profits flowing into their government coffers via their national oil companies.

Madam Secretary, I have no doubt that you and others in the Administration are working to make sure those who promised money to rebuild Iraq actually make good on those promises. Therefore, I respectfully request that you provide me with a written update of the Administration's efforts in this regard. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

WALTER B. JONES,
Member of Congress.

I look forward to hearing the administration's response and an update on what steps they are taking to insure the Arab countries fulfill their pledges to aid Iraq. Our government should be working to make sure that those who promised money to help rebuild Iraq actually make good on those promises.

While oil is at a record high of near \$104 a barrel, American taxpayers are facing prices of more than \$3 at the pump.

Mr. Speaker, out of fairness to the American taxpayer, it is time that the administration tell these Arab countries that they are running record surpluses, that they need to pay their bills in Iraq. Again, they pledged \$15.8 billion. They have only paid \$2.5 billion. And the poor taxpayer of America is having to foot the bill to rebuild Iraq. It is not right, and it's time that we ask those rich Arab countries to meet their responsibilities.

LET'S THINK ABOUT THE NUMBERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, when asked about the possibility of gas going up to \$4 a gallon, the President of the United States and leader of the free world said, "That's interesting. I hadn't heard that."

Yes, gas prices are predicted to top \$4 a gallon, and the leader of the free world doesn't even know? Something is clearly wrong.

Mr. Speaker, with an economy based on the fuel of yesterday, America needs new vision and leadership. We cannot rely on leaders who don't know what most Americans understand and are living every day, that our oil economy is based on borrowed time that is fast running out.

Let's think about these numbers. A recent Congressional Research Service paper summarized the point clearly. Researchers predict that a 10 percent

increase in oil prices lowers economic growth in our country by a quarter point to a little over a point over the next four quarters, compared to a flat growth rate for oil prices.

When President Bush took office, gasoline cost 1.45 a gallon. Today gasoline averages \$3.17 a gallon, with some analysts saying the price could reach \$4 a gallon. Californians already know that.

The American people don't need the Congressional Research Service to do the math to understand what this means, but let's run the numbers just for the sake of argument.

During Bush's tenure in office, the average price of gasoline has increased over 218 percent; not 10 percent, 218 percent. With researchers predicting that a one quarter increase of 10 percent in oil prices leads to an economic contraction of a quarter percent to 1.1 percent for the following four quarters, the American people can only imagine what a 218 percent increase has meant for the American consumer over the last 7 years. It is profound.

In rough terms, the Bush economic stewardship plan has driven our economy into a tailspin. Our economy is in trouble. It needs rescuing. And our top leader doesn't even know prices could reach \$4 a gallon?

We should have learned something from the first Arab oil embargo of the 1970s when the United States suffered both high unemployment and rampant inflation. President Reagan called it the misery index. Don't we remember that misery? It's being exacted on the American people again.

The rising prices of oil imports in 2006 and 2007 alone accounted for over \$70 billion of our mammoth trade deficit. The global savings glut is being driven largely by the transfer of wealth from our country and western democracies to the oil rich kingdoms of the Middle East, and this imbalance continues to grow, and our people continue to suffer more.

The dollar declines. It's very clear what's happening. Gasoline prices are destroying the economic gains of our economy every day, pushing up our trade deficit and making America less competitive on the global market.

Every paper you open up there are layoffs in community after community after community, coast to coast, and people are losing their homes at greater rates. Without a course correction, the next generation will never be able to compete.

Energy legislation this House considered last week is a step in the right direction, and the other body ought to pass it quickly. But it is only a step.

This is the time for America to redouble our efforts and invest in an energy-independent future that uses geothermal, wind, biomass, solar, advanced vehicle research, new fuels of all kinds and new vehicles, developing the technologies of tomorrow for this new century.

America needs energy independence now, not in 2025, not even in 2015. We

need every single elected official at the national level to be committed to energy independence now. We need a change in this Capitol city. We need a change in the White House, and we need people elected to this Congress who will save America from ruin because of the terrible toll that rising oil prices are having on the innards of this economy, in every borough, in every hamlet, in every city, in every town across this country.

It is high time America moved from the carbon-based economy into the carbohydrate economy, and we can't do it fast enough.

The sun waits to be captured. The wind across our plains needs to be put to new use, and it is renewable. It was given to us as a precious gift. We ought to use it. And we need to have elected officials who are committed to this great American quest in this new American century.

SUNSET MEMORIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker it is March 4, 2008, in the land of the free and the home of the brave, and before the sun set today in America, almost 4,000 more defenseless unborn children were killed by abortion on demand—just today. That is more than the number of innocent American lives that were lost on September 11th, only it happens every day.

It has now been exactly 12,825 days since the travesty called Roe v. Wade was handed down. Since then, the very foundation of this Nation has been stained by the blood of almost 50 million children. And all of them had at least four things in common.

They were each just little babies who had done nothing wrong to anyone. And each one of them died a nameless and lonely death. And each of their mothers, whether she realizes it immediately or not, will never be the same.

All the gifts that these children might have brought to humanity are now lost forever.

Mr. Speaker, those noble heroes lying in frozen silence out in Arlington National Cemetery did not die so America could shred her own Constitution, as well as her own children, by the millions. It seems that we are never quite so eloquent as when we condemn the genocidal crimes of past generations, those who allowed their courts to strip the black man and the Jew of their constitutional personhood, and then proceeded to murderously desecrate millions of these, God's own children.

Yet even in the full glare of such tragedy, this generation clings to a blind, invincible ignorance while history repeats itself and our own genocide mercilessly annihilates the most helpless of all victims to date, those yet unborn.

Perhaps it is important for those of us in this Chamber to remind ourselves again of why we are really all here.

Thomas Jefferson said, "The care of human life and its happiness and not its destruction is the chief and only object of good government."

The phrase in the 14th amendment capsulizes our entire Constitution. It says: "No state shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law." Mr. Speaker, protecting the lives of our innocent citizens and their constitutional rights is why we are all here. It is our sworn oath.

The bedrock foundation of this Republic is that clarion Declaration of the self-evident truth that all human beings are created equal and endowed by their creator with the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Every conflict and battle our Nation has ever faced can be traced to our commitment to this core self-evident truth. It has made us the beacon of hope for the entire world. It is who we are.

And yet another day has passed, Mr. Speaker, and we in this body have failed again to honor that foundational commitment. We failed our sworn oath and our God-given responsibility as we broke faith with nearly 4,000 more innocent American babies who died today without the protection we should have been given them.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this discussion presents this Congress and the American people with two destiny questions.

The first that all of us must ask ourselves is very simple: Does abortion really kill a baby? If the answer is "yes," there is a second destiny question that inevitably follows.

And it is this, Mr. Speaker: Will we allow ourselves to be dragged by those who have lost their way into a darkness where the light of human compassion has gone out and the predatory survival of the fittest prevails over humanity? Or will America embrace her destiny to lead the world to cherish and honor the God-given miracle of each human life?

Mr. Speaker, it has been said that every baby comes with a message, that God has not yet despaired of mankind. And I mourn that those 4,000 messages sent to us today will never be heard. Mr. Speaker, I also have not yet despaired. Because tonight maybe someone new, maybe even someone in this Congress, who hears this sunset memorial will finally realize that abortion really does kill little babies, that it hurts mothers in ways that we can never express, and that 12,825 days spent legally killing nearly 50 million children in America is enough, and that the America that rejected human slavery and marched into Europe to arrest the Nazi Holocaust, is still courageous and compassionate enough to find a better way for mothers and their babies than abortion on demand.

So tonight, Mr. Speaker, may we each remind ourselves that our own days in this sunshine of life are also numbered and that all too soon each of us will walk from these Chambers for the very last time.

And if it should be that this Congress is allowed to convene on yet another day to come, may that be the day when we finally hear the cries of the innocent unborn. May that be the day we find the humanity, the courage, and the will to embrace together our human and our constitutional duty to protect the least of these, our tiny American brothers and sisters, from this murderous scourge upon our Nation called abortion on demand.

It is March 4, 2008—12,825 days since *Roe v. Wade*—in the land of free and the home of the brave.

MEDICARE CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in 1965 the hot car on the American market was a Ford Mustang, which cost less than \$2,000. The President of the United States was Lyndon Johnson. The entire Federal budget was less than \$100 billion. The war that was on the front pages was the war in south Vietnam. The Super Bowl didn't exist. Cell phones didn't exist. If you wanted to use a computer, you typed out your program on data index cards and submitted them in a batch to a mainframe computer. I believe the dominant mainframe was an IBM 360. Gasoline cost approximately 25 cents a gallon, and a little-noticed program was put into effect to help our senior citizens with their health care costs called Medicare.

Forty-three years later, that Medicare program is going to expend over \$400 billion to provide health care for over 45 million senior citizens in every State and territory of the United States. If something is not changed between now and the year 2018, in the year 2018, or 2019, the Medicare Trust Fund is going to be bankrupt.

If we look back in 1965 at how health care was provided and look at how it's provided in 2008, you would see numerous differences. We now focus, in Medicare, through the Medicare Advantage programs, which 20 percent of our seniors have chosen, on preventive care. A lot of Medicare spending today is through drug therapy, as opposed to surgery, things of this sort.

But the one thing that's constant has been the continuing escalation in cost. Medicare has averaged double digit increases in cost the last 10 years, and it's expected, by the year 2018, to be over \$800 billion.

Medicare spending this year of over \$400 billion is going to exceed by a factor of 4 the entire Federal budget back in 1965, the year that was created.

So because of the increase in the population, the increase in the complexity, the diversity of health care therapies, several years ago the Congress put into place what's called the Medicare trigger. The Medicare trigger says that in any year that Medicare spending or Medicare revenues come from 45 percent or more of the general revenue, i.e., the premiums that Medicare beneficiaries and the cost share that companies and Medicare payors pay into the system, when more than 45 percent of the funds going into Medicare come from the general U.S. Treasury, the Medicare trustees have to issue to the Congress a report. And if this happens 2 years in a row, the President of the United States has to submit a proposal to the Congress on how to bring spending back below the 45 percent trigger. That happened for the first time last

year, in fiscal year 2006, and it's happened again this year, in the fiscal year that just ended, fiscal year 2007.

So several weeks ago the President and the Secretary of Health and Human Services presented to this Congress a report that did two things: Number 1, it did announce that the spending had exceeded 45 percent of the revenues of the general treasury, and Number 2, it put forward an outline of the proposal on how to bring that spending back below the 45 percent trigger.

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The Congress does not have to act on the President's proposal. The Congress can initiate one of its own. In fact, if 70 Members of this House decide that they want a different proposal than the President of the United States, if 70 Members will sign a letter, I believe, to the Speaker of the House and also to the chairman of the Budget Committee, those 70 Members will present their proposal to the Budget Committee. If the Budget Committee holds hearings and certifies that the proposal that's been submitted by the 70 Members does, in fact, meet the requirements of the law, that proposal then is ordered reported to the House of Representatives for an up-or-down vote.

So sometime in the next several months, you are going to hopefully see a number of proposals submitted to the Budget Committee on how to deal with the pending crisis in Medicare. And I would encourage all Members of this body, since we all have Medicare recipients in our congressional districts, to be a part of some group that tries to address this problem.

Now, the President's proposal, again, it is not a definitive legislative language developed proposal. It's more of an outline of policy objectives, but the policy objectives are pretty straight forward: number one, Medicare beneficiaries that have higher incomes would pay slightly more in their premiums so you would begin to have a graduated means-tested premium increase based on your ability to pay the Medicare premium; number two would be a Medicare liability reform proposal that has been talked about for years. That, by itself, would probably save \$180 billion over 5 years or so. There would be a requirement for more pricing transparency and more openness, so that Medicare beneficiaries could see what prices they're paying or are being paid on their behalf. And also there are some proposals, I believe, on quality indexing, quality of reporting so that, again, before the beneficiary decides where to have a particular procedure done or which doctor to use, he or she might have some data on the quality of the health care that's provided by various Medicare providers.

All in all, the President's proposal is very modest, but it's certainly one that needs to be seriously considered; and, again, the need for doing something on Medicare is something that we need to